



**King County**

Department of Community and Human Services

**Developmental Disabilities Division**

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## **Natural Environments Leadership Team Meeting**

### **May 15, 2006**

**Participants:** Kevin Bernadt, KCDDD Board  
Jon Botten, Children's Therapy Center  
Jane Campbell, King County DDD  
Jane Dobrovolny, Northwest Center  
Sandy Duncan, CHAP  
Lisa Greenwald, Kinderling Center  
Betsy McAlister, King County Parent Coalition  
Jana Pettit, Wonderland  
Susan Sandall, UW-EEU  
Magan Scoggins, Encompass  
Jan Wrathall, King County DDD

**Minutes:** Elaine Goddard, King County DDD

**Facilitator:** David Wertheimer, Kelly Point Partners

The group did introductions and a warm up exercise. The previous meeting's notes were reviewed and revised. Finalized meeting notes will be posted on the web.

Some providers had a recent conversation with the State Part C Coordinator, Sandy Loerch-Morris, and brought up some concerns for which Sandy sought County input. Jane wished to clarify the County's position on some of the areas of concern that are relevant to this group's work. Jane will send Sandy a written response.

- Concerns that providers will be required to follow one model: Although services must be compliant with Part C natural environments, the County has funded 5 technical assistance grants for a variety of models and has stated at Provider Meetings that no one model is being required by the County.
- Concerns that the County will not consider any justifications for why services can not be provided in natural environments: The County acknowledges that there may be rare situations where services need to be provided in a setting other than a natural environment and will consider justification on an individual, case-by-case basis.
- Concern that implementation of natural environments will result in a 2 tiered system: Natural environment does not imply the County is going to a 2 tiered system.
- Concern that some agencies that provide therapies will not refer to a system in natural environments. The primary referral source, including EI providers, must refer families to Part C services. Washington Health Foundation (WHF) has been identified as the central location for referrals.

### County "Assignments"

1. The County provided a Draft document outlining its authority regarding natural environments. It included policies at the Federal, State and County level. It showed that anything provided under the ITEIP umbrella must be in compliance with Part C. All agreed it shows authority for the "where" of putting natural environments into practice.
2. The County provided a "filter" statement based on conversations with Sandy Loerch-Morris. The group agreed that they would like clarification on several aspects of the statement, including:
  - define what "activity" relates to. Federal law indicates setting, not activity. How does activity relate to the federal description of setting?
  - what is meant by "the long run"?
  - "as it currently exists" – what does it mean?
  - "sustain itself" - Does this mean financially or something else?
  - does the filter address the unique needs of kids with developmental disabilities? It does not seem to address accommodating a child with a disability.

The group would like the State to provide a written statement. The team agreed to put forward questions of clarification to the State. The County will draft a letter for the group to approve and then will send it to the State. If the State will not clarify in writing, the group could put together its own ideas and present them to the State.

3. The County provided Draft Proposed Guidelines-Definition of location of natural environments. The information came from the Federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and dealt primarily with defining the settings in the ITEIP database. The group didn't feel it offered definitive criteria to explain what constitutes a natural environment. The group decided to brainstorm criteria that would make a setting a natural environment:
  - it would continue to exist without kids with disabilities, or
  - it is in the child's family or caregiver's home; or
  - it is in a family, friend or neighbor's home; or
  - it is an integrated community location or program designed for children of all abilities and typically developing children are participants.

The County also passed out copies of the WA ITEIP Guidelines for Implementing EI Services in Natural Environments and a Joint Task Force report done in 2000.

When discussing evidence based practices some people suggested creating focus groups to get input from parents and other sources on how various practices could impact them. Groups to consider include parents, therapists, and referrers such as child care providers and medical providers. It would be good to hear feedback and concerns, but it must be clear that these groups will not be able to set policy. However, it would help us to address concerns and help families and others understand the policy. It was suggested to bring in parents after a draft of the definition is put together to find out which practices make sense. Joyce Duran and Dave Black, from O'Neil and Associates, can help. It was suggested doing this by early July. The group would also like to bring in experts and have a panel discussion on "how" services could be provided in the County. Susan suggested bringing in specialists to find out what natural environments means to them in their professional life. Susan and the County will put a panel together.

Homework:

- County - Get clarification from ITEIP on state's "filter".
- County/Susan - Start putting panel together for early July
- All – Sub-group to put together definition of where. Jon & Lisa will participate.
- ***The next meeting will be June 1, from 1:30 - 4:00 pm, at Region 4 - Capital Hill Room.***